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Human resources management

Human resources management reform: the Talent Management tool, Inspira

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides information on the implementation of the new human resources management system, Inspira, pursuant to section XIII, paragraph 3, of General Assembly resolution 63/250. Inspira provides the technological foundation for staffing, performance management and learning management and replaces current systems supporting those functions (Galaxy, Nucleus and e-PAS). The report describes the background, governance and timeline of the project, Inspira modules and operational support arrangements.

The General Assembly is requested to take note of the report.

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I. Overview

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to section XIII, paragraph 3, of General Assembly resolution 63/250, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the human resources management information technology system.

2. The General Assembly approved the implementation of a new talent management system in December 2006 in its resolution 61/244. The scope of the system, defined in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in people" (A/61/255, para. 371), included a new technological infrastructure for e-staffing, a learning management system and a system for reporting and managing data. In accordance with paragraphs 158 and 168 of the report of the Secretary-General dated 14 August 2008 (A/63/282), performance management (the e-PAS) and a career website were also included in the scope of the new talent management system. On the basis of these requirements, the Organization selected Inspira by Oracle as the software foundation for the talent management system.

3. The Inspira software is delivered in modules (such as e-staffing and e-performance) that integrate with each other. Learning management was another module offered by the vendor. The Chief Information Technology Officer of the United Nations recommended in late 2008 that the Oracle enterprise learning management module be considered instead of conducting a procurement process for a separate system, and following negotiations with the vendor the Oracle enterprise learning management module was also purchased. Incorporating this module into the Inspira platform allowed the Organization to take advantage of existing project infrastructure and governance. A single platform for talent management also addresses the concern of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions regarding the potential for the proliferation of databases, resulting in fragmented and incompatible information systems, as well as inefficiencies and duplication of effort (see A/63/746, para. 78).

4. Inspira provides the technological infrastructure required to support talent management, which is comprised of staffing, performance management and learning management. The new Inspira system replaces the systems that currently support staffing and performance management (Galaxy, Nucleus and e-PAS). Inspira also brings new technological support to learning management, which was not previously available. It also encompasses foundational elements for cross-business processes such as position management, a careers portal and reporting.

5. Inspira supports the business requirements for human resources management in both headquarters locations and field missions, supporting the organizational direction for an integrated headquarters and field. With Inspira, the capacity of the Organization to plan, execute, monitor and report on issues related to its talent on a global basis is significantly strengthened. Staff benefit through a single sign-on, single profile and common navigation scheme.

II. Project governance and implementation

A. Governance

6. A project steering committee for the talent management system was established in March 2007. The role of the committee is to oversee and direct the project and it is chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. Committee members include representatives from the Office of Human Resources Management, the Field Personnel Division of the Department of Field Support, and the Office of Information and Communications Technology.

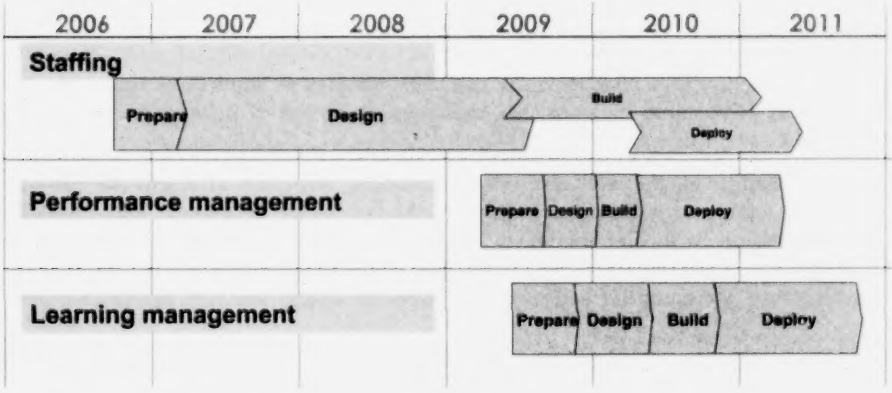
7. Inspira was developed with full support from the Office of Information and Communications Technology. In addition to dedicating a Director from that Office to the talent management project steering committee, the Office provided the project team with ongoing advice and support to ensure alignment with other technology initiatives.

8. A project management office oversees the daily workings of the project, comprised of project team leaders and representatives of key stakeholders, and reporting directly to the project steering committee. The project management office provides coordination across project teams and raises key issues to the project steering committee for resolution.

9. The Inspira team has worked with the Umoja project team throughout the duration of the project to ensure alignment between these two initiatives. The Umoja and Inspira teams are collaborating to identify and deal with specific integration points. Coordination between Inspira and Umoja is done through weekly meetings between the project teams. Content-specific workshops have been conducted to ensure a common understanding of interfaces between the two projects. Both the Oracle Software and SAP (Umoja's technical platform) are industry standards and are used together in other organizations of the United Nations system. The United Nations will therefore be able to leverage vendor experience and interoperable system capabilities.

B. Timeline

Figure I
Consolidated Inspira project timeline



10. Deployment of Inspira began in April 2010 and will continue through 2011. As reflected in figure I, Inspira development followed standard project management phases. The "Prepare" phase included activities conducted after the decision was made to move forward with the project. A project charter was created defining scope, governance and an overall project plan. In the "Design" phase, extensive consultations were undertaken with key stakeholders to develop business processes that reflected policies. The process design work started with conceptual frameworks and moved through greater levels of detail, concluding in production of detailed business requirements that guided application development. Code was written and tested in the "Build" phase, which also included migration of staff data from legacy systems into Inspira. The program code was released in the "Deploy" phase.

11. Inspira supports approximately 44,000 staff, in 31 departments and 32 field missions, who are currently being supported using Galaxy, e-PAS and Nucleus. With the deployment of Inspira to the field, locally recruited staff will for the first time participate in the Organization's official human resources systems.

12. Training, communications and other organizational change management activities were conducted to support the transition to Inspira. These activities started during the various "Build" phases and will continue through the "Deploy" phases.

13. Inspira training was delivered using a cascading approach (train-the-trainer). Week-long training sessions were conducted at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters to provide human resources practitioners with the information that they need to be able to carry out their work using Inspira and provide training to their colleagues. In preparation for field deployment, training was held for advanced users in field missions in June 2010 and a train-the-trainer session is planned for November 2010. Detailed user guides have been developed as reference material to address questions from the staff.

14. Multiple modes were used to communicate to staff about Inspira and its deployment. A website was set up specifically to support communications to the staff regarding Inspira. The site provides information on policy, process and the new technology. The site also supports a blog by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management on the topic of Inspira. Directors of the Office of Human Resources Management conducted town hall meetings with staff at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters in the weeks and months before deployment to introduce Inspira and discuss the associated policy changes. Broadcast e-mail messages were also sent to staff.

15. The development and implementation of any system of this size and complexity will result in challenges. Inspira implementation was no exception in this regard. In particular, the implementation of the system did not meet the initial schedule because of a change in the company selected to implement the software, refinement of business requirements and underestimation of resource requirements and effort.

16. A change in the software implementation company affected the project schedule. Owing to circumstances beyond the control of the project team, project implementation with the company initially selected to implement the Oracle software was discontinued in May 2009, 10 months into the contract. At the time of its departure, the company had just completed the fit/gap analysis, the prerequisite

to start development. A new company was selected as the implementation partner and development began in August 2009.

17. A major challenge for the project was aligning development efforts with the substantial policy review and revision, which included integrating the staffing process for Headquarters and the field and culminated in a new staffing policy, issued in April 2010. The project team recognized that requirements would be likely to change as development work began and accepted the risk of redoing some of the work to be able to move forward with development.

18. From a project management perspective, the levels of both resources and effort required were underestimated. Given the initial resource requirement estimates, the project team was created with only a few full-time team members from information technology resources and none from the human resources business areas. Most project team members worked on the Inspira project while continuing other day-to-day duties. This issue was recognized as the deployment date neared and team members were assigned to the project full-time.

19. Beginning in April 2010, the Inspira system entered the stabilization phase. During stabilization, necessary enhancements and fixes are made to the system to improve the user interface and solve technical issues. This phase will end in October 2010.

C. Project costs

20. Figure II provides an overview of project costs to date, along with the approved budget through 2011. Project costs are reported by source (regular budget and support account budget) and year and include contractual services, general temporary assistance and travel costs.

Figure II

Inspira project cost breakdown, by regular budget and support account budget

(Millions of United States dollars)

Source/year	*Cost*	*Percentage*
Regular budget		
2006-2007	—	
2008-2009	2.2	
2010-2011	0.6	
Subtotal	**2.9**	**22**
Support account		
2006/07	—	
2007/08	1.8	
2008/09	2.5	

Source/year	*Cost*	*Percentage*
2009/10	2.5	
2010/11	3.6	
Subtotal	**10.4**	**78**
Total	**13.3**	**100**

III. Inspira modules

A. Staffing

21. Inspira supports the business requirements and new policy of the staff selection system as defined in administrative instruction ST/AI/2010/3. Inspira specifically supports advertising of vacancies on the Internet, collecting applications, screening applicants, scheduling and managing interviews, management of review body processes, review by department heads and finally a transition to the onboarding process.

22. Inspira supports the following specific functionalities, as compared with the legacy recruitment system:

(a) *Rostering and sourcing.* Galaxy provided simple rostering support only. Inspira supports full text search and parameter-based searching abilities;

(b) *Search abilities and screening.* In Galaxy, hiring managers had limited tools to review résumés. Screening of candidates was limited to using simple keyword searches. Inspira offers Boolean (and/or, inclusive, exclusive, etc.) types of searches for various factors. Inspira provides functionality for screening questions or other layers of review to help narrow down the number of candidates;

(c) *Pre-screening.* Galaxy did not include a functionality to automatically determine candidate eligibility. Based on specific parameters, Inspira can determine the eligibility of applicants for the jobs to which they are applying. In cases where there is no clear decision on eligibility, applications are identified as requiring review. This functionality is expected to reduce time-consuming manual review of applications and help the Organization to cope with the overwhelming number of applications received, particularly for field missions;

(d) *Tracking of candidate applications status.* Within Galaxy, the candidate application status only had two values: "under consideration" and "selection made". Inspira provides more detailed status reporting of the progress of candidates through the recruitment process;

(e) *Offers of appointment and onboarding.* Galaxy did not have features to provide offers of appointment. There was no link between the selection decision in Galaxy and the offer and onboarding in the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). Inspira will support the generation of offer letters and will track completion of other onboarding activities that are currently executed outside the system. This support for onboarding will be transitional in that most of this process will be supported by Umoja once it is deployed.

23. To facilitate the earliest possible implementation of the new staffing policy and owing to the size of the task, development and deployment of the staffing module was broken down into a series of releases. Each release constituted a grouping of system functionalities, as follows:

(a) The first release, deployed at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters in March 2010, consisted of basic functionality to create job openings and staff/job-seeker profiles;

(b) The second release, deployed in April 2010, extended the user community to the regional commissions and introduced functionality to allow posting of job openings and assessment of applicants. Specific functionality in this release includes applicant pre-screening and selection. The new careers portal was deployed with this release;

(c) Work on the second release will conclude in September 2010 when the functionality for the central review bodies and rostering are deployed;

(d) The release scheduled for November 2010 will include functionality for position management and the onboarding process. Field operations will start using Inspira, including all functionality developed up to that time, when this release is deployed;

(e) A subsequent release for all remaining users is scheduled for February 2011 and will include functionality to administer tests to candidates for substantive assessment, information on the location of field mission openings and support for the reference checking process.

24. An Inspira release is being considered for 2011/12 to extend the staffing process to additional personnel categories, including processing of national competitive examination candidates, consultants and other contracts of less than one year in duration.

B. Performance management

25. Inspira supports the new processes defined in the new performance management and development policy. Specifically, Inspira supports:

(a) Multi-rater feedback;

(b) Supervisor feedback;

(c) Creation of both performance management and career management documents.

26. The new performance management system was deployed on a pilot basis in April 2010. The scope of the pilot included approximately 5,000 users in the Department of Management, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Field Personnel Division of the Department of Field Support, Africa II Division of the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the Mexico Office of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is expected that the system will be deployed to all departments and duty stations by April 2011.

C. Learning management

27. Inspira will allow for course scheduling, attendee record-keeping and provision of online courses through an e-learning component. The learning management system will improve the efficiency of the planning, management, tracking and reporting of learning across the Secretariat, and facilitate access of staff to online learning options, which is of particular importance for staff in the field. Specifically, Inspira support for learning management includes:

(a) Single sign-on and portal to all learning programmes (instructor-led, online, United Nations and third party);

(b) Easy login or self-registration and enrolment for all learning programmes;

(c) Learning plan management (individual and department/office);

(d) Automated waiting list management;

(e) Class, classroom, participant and instructor management;

(f) Course catalogue and competency management;

(g) Evaluation and impact assessment management;

(h) Management, hosting and tracking for online and e-learning courses.

D. Foundational elements

28. In addition to the major modules, Inspira also encompasses foundational elements, specifically position management, reporting and a careers portal. These elements were developed within the timeline of the staffing module.

29. Position management is the set of processes for the creation and management of staffing tables and the association of positions to posts. The staff data and organizational structures in the staffing tables are used in the staffing process. Position management functionality is critical for managing human resources in field missions as Inspira replaces Nucleus. This functionality will also be useful for Executive Officers in Headquarters departments who currently use spreadsheets and other computer-based tools to manage staffing tables. The position management function will move to Umoja once that system is deployed.

30. Inspira's data warehouse and reporting module provides powerful analysis and reporting tools. These tools support the reporting requirements that were identified for each module and will aggregate data from Inspira and IMIS. The reporting tools will be used to set targets and track performance for the different human resources processes within the scope of Inspira, replacing the current platform used to report on similar indicators in the human resources action plans. These tools will also facilitate preparing other human resources reports, such as the United Nations demographics report on the composition of the Secretariat.

31. Inspira also includes a new careers portal, which replaces the former United Nations jobs site. The careers portal improves on the current jobs website of the Galaxy system by providing a more contemporary graphical interface and better information about the Organization and employment opportunities for job seekers.

Potential applicants can find information about the remuneration scales for various levels, learn about job networks and job families and see real examples of staff members' careers.

IV. Operational support

32. Inspira users are supported by a new support centre located at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which provides help desk support, maintenance and development for Inspira.

33. Since the launch of the system in April 2010, the Inspira support centre has provided help desk support for external candidates for jobs as well as staff members and human resource practitioners at Headquarters and in the field. Through early July 2010, the Inspira support centre help desk received over 6,000 queries from staff members and external applicants, primarily regarding system access, performance and data quality. Technical problems are being prioritized and addressed. Using data from the help desk and working with the various departments and offices, the Inspira support centre works proactively to identify and implement system enhancements. The support centre is also in the process of establishing indicators to measure the service levels in responding to requests for support from users.

34. The Inspira support centre is responsible for management and hosting all technical infrastructure (hardware, software and connectivity) for the Inspira system. The Inspira support centre also oversees provision of disaster recovery, which is provided through the data centre of the company implementing the Inspira software.

V. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

35. The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.